



31 OCT 2018



Dear 

On 26 September 2018, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment transferred your request, under the Official Information Act 1982, for the following information:

- *Information relating to the number of refugees for whom the benefit is a source of income.*

The table overleaf addresses your request. Please find below information about quota (mandate) refugees and convention refugees.

Upon arrival in New Zealand quota refugees receive permanent residence and the usual two year stand-down period for accessing the welfare system is waived. Quota refugees spend their first six weeks in New Zealand at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC) where they participate in a reception programme which aims to build basic social and coping skills required for refugees' new lives in New Zealand and provide information on work and expectations of employment. Prior to arrival in New Zealand refugees are provided with information about working and living in New Zealand and an assessment is completed for each refugee to identify needs and services required once refugees arrive at MRRC.

Following completion of the reception programme refugees are sent to one of seven refugee settlement locations across New Zealand. They are Auckland, Hamilton/Waikato, Palmerston North/Manawatū, Greater Wellington, Nelson, Dunedin and Invercargill. These settlement locations are chosen based on a range of criteria including access to employment opportunities.

More information about the refugee quota programme and the refugee resettlement strategy is available at the following web-link: www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/our-strategies-and-projects/refugee-resettlement-strategy.

Refugees who apply for refugee status under any criteria other than as quota refugees are known as convention refugees. They can apply for refugee status before arriving in New Zealand, upon arrival or after arrival. Once they are granted refugee status, they have to apply for a residence class visa to become entitled to reside indefinitely in New Zealand. Refugees and protected persons with permanent residence are exempt from meeting the two years continuous residence criteria to be eligible for a main benefit.

Therefore, convention refugees can become eligible for a main benefit from the date the residence class visa (issued under the Immigration Act 2009) or residence permit (issued under the Immigration Act 1987) was granted.

The Ministry is unable to electronically identify all clients who entered New Zealand as refugees, as this is not information that is entered as a marker on client files. In order to provide you with the information you have requested, Ministry staff would have to manually review hundreds of thousands of client files. As such your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act (the Act). The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

Even if this work were to be undertaken, the Ministry does not routinely record clients' entry status to New Zealand, including whether it was as a refugee. As such, this information may not be held on all client files. Consequently, your request is also refused under section 18(g) of the Act, as in some cases the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and there are no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation in a way in which it could be utilised to address your request without substantial manual collation.

The Ministry has considered whether it would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. In either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

In order to address the intent of your request, the Ministry is able to provide information about clients who have an immigration date in the past five years, a country of birth other than New Zealand, and who have received either a Special Needs Grant for 'Refugee Relocation Allowance', or have received an Emergency Benefit granted for reason 'Spontaneous Refugee' or 'Quota Refugee'. This count will include all quota refugees who arrived in the past five years, and some convention refugees, but does not capture any convention refugees who did not receive either the Special Needs Grant or Emergency Benefit.

Current working age clients estimated as having entered New Zealand as a refugee receiving main benefits as at the end of September 2018.

Current benefit	Total
Jobseeker Support	839
Supported Living Payment related	57
Sole Parent Support	156
Other	101
Total	1,153

Notes:

- Refugees are estimated based on clients with an immigration date in the last 5 years who have a country of birth other than New Zealand and have had either a Special Needs Grant for 'Refugee Relocation Allowance' or have received an Emergency Benefit granted for reason 'Spontaneous Refugee' or 'Quota Refugee'.
- 'Other' includes Emergency Benefit, Jobseeker Support Student Hardship, Emergency Maintenance Allowance, Youth Payment and Young Parent Payment.
- This table includes working age only (18 to 64 years).

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter available to the wider public shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding refugees in receipt of a benefit, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Cassandra Wise
Manager, Issue Resolution